

HECLA NO. 2 MINE AND COKE WORKS
H.C. Frick Coke Company
Between T571 and Rte 981,
.3 miles W of Trauger
Trauger Vicinity
Westmoreland County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-293

HAER
PA
65-TRAUG-V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HECLA NO. 2 MINE AND COKE WORKS

HAER
PA
65-TRAUG
1-

HAER No. PA-293

Location: Between T571 and Rte 981, .3 miles W of Trauger, Mt. Pleasant Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1889

Builder: Stark Brothers, Greensburg, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: unknown

Present Use: abandoned

Significance: One of many coke works established in the Connellsville Coke Regions of Westmoreland and Fayette County, Hecla No. 2 mine was developed by Thomas Laird to supply coal for approximately 500 coke ovens eventually constructed on the site. Unlike most coking sites in the region, oven faces were of brick and concrete block and not cut stone.

Project Information: In February, 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Westmoreland County to identify the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

Compiler: Gray Fitzsimons and Kenneth Rose, Editors

DESCRIPTION: No mine buildings survive in the Hecla area. (There were two mines, Hecla No. 1 and No. 3, which were both closed by 1929.) Part of the beehive coke works survives at Hecla No. 3. One row of bank ovens and two rows of beehive block ovens extend along the north side of Sewickley Creek. A total of nearly 150 ovens of brick construction and nearly fifty with concrete-block fronts constitute this battery of coke ovens. A reservoir, just east of the ovens, is now used as a fishing pond. It was originally built to impound water used for quenching coke produced at Hecla No. 2.

The town of Trauger once included four rows of company-built houses situated above the coke works along Sewickley Creek. The majority of these houses and the company store have been burned or demolished. Only about five company-built houses survive: three are on Second Street, one is on Apple Street, and the fifth is on an unnamed street to the east. Though somewhat altered in appearance the five surviving houses are in good condition. They are identical in construction and are T-shaped two-story wood-frame buildings with gable roofs, two brick chimneys, and a rubble stone foundation. Originally these were double houses; however, they have been converted into single-family houses. Trauger features one other architecturally impressive historic building, the St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church. Standing on the south side of Route 981, this large brick building was built in 1914 in the Spanish Renaissance style. It is in excellent condition.

HISTORY: Located at the southern junction of the West Penn Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Hecla Coke Company, controlled by the Thaw interests of Pittsburgh, established the town of Hecla, and the Hecla mine No. 1 and coke works in 1882. Seven years later the Hecla Coke Company built a second town which it named Trauger, along with Hecla No. 2 mine and coke works. (Trauger subsequently became the larger of the two operations; see entry below.) In 1902 Hecla Coke developed a third mine and coke works, south of Hecla No. 1. Hecla No. 3, a shaft-entry mine, contained a steel head frame, 92' high, a brick boiler house and hoisting engine, a blacksmith and repair shop, a fan house which contained a 15' diameter Capell fan, and a lamp house and oil house each of brick construction.

In 1889 the Hecla Coke Company, led by Thomas Laird, developed its No. 2 mine and coke works. W. G. Wilkins, a Pittsburgh mining engineer, was retained by the company to design and lay out the colliery and mine. The company sank a shaft about 223' deep and lined it with large oak timbers. The shaft contained three sections, two of which were used for hauling men, coal, and materials. The third section was for the pumpway. The original head frame was of heavy timber construction, stood 35' high, and supported iron sheaves 12' in diameter. The Jeansville Iron Works of Jeansville, Pennsylvania, manufactured the winding engines which were housed in a brick engine house (measuring 50' x 40'). The boilers were housed in a brick building with an iron roof (the building measuring about 79' x 54'). Coal was to be delivered to a nearby large beehive coke works that was under construction and was to contain 500 ovens when completed. The Stark Brothers of Greensburg served as contractors of the construction of the coke works and mine buildings. In addition, the Hecla Coke Company contracted with the firm of Wallis & Carley of Sharon, Pennsylvania, to build twenty-three double houses, along with an office and company store.

HECLA NO. 2 MINE AND COKE WORKS

HAER No. PA-293

(Page 3)

By 1890 these facilities were complete and the mine was running. Miners produced nearly 98,000 tons of coal that year and the coke works, with 300 ovens in operation, produced more than 61,000 tons of coke. Both the mine and coke works employed 260 persons. These production figures rose to 357,000 tons of coal produced annually by 1900 and 254,000 tons of coke produced that year, using 500 beehive coke ovens. The company employed 448 persons at Hecla No. 2 in 1900. Six years later the H. C. Frick Coke Company acquired the Hecla Coke Company and installed H. L. Henderson as superintendent at Trauger. Through the 1910s, Hecla No. 2 was averaging about 225,000 tons of coal and 140,000 tons of coke each year. The population at Trauger during the 1910s was about 1,000 persons. The H. C. Frick Coke Company continued to operate Hecla No. 2 until 1925 when Frick permanently closed the mine and coke works.

The H. C. Frick Coke Company acquired the properties of the Hecla Coke Company in 1906. This included the two towns, Hecla and Trauger, and the Nos. 1, 2, and 3 mines and coke works. Hecla No. 1 had 272 coke ovens, and Nos. 2 and 3 each had 300 coke ovens. In 1906 the three coke works produced over 401,000 tons of coke, and the three mines employed 814 miners. In the 1910s the population of Hecla numbered about 1,000 persons. By 1918 Hecla Nos. 1 and 3 were superintended by A. H. Pollins with No. 3 leading slightly in the production of coal. That year No. 3 produced over 285,000 tons of coal, compared to the nearly 270,000 tons produced at No. 1. Except for the years 1921-22, from the late 1910s through the mid 1920s production of coal at No. 1 and No. 3 remained about the same as that produced in 1918. During this period coke production generally remained above 150,000 tons per year at each of the coke works.

In 1926 the company reduced its operations at Hecla No. 1. Only eleven coke ovens were used at No. 1 and the mine produced less than 30,000 tons of coal. Production at Hecla No. 3 diminished the following year and Frick closed the mine and coke works in 1928. One year later the company abandoned Hecla No. 1. Soon after Hecla No. 3 was closed Frick removed the company-built houses on Goat Hill which were located near the No. 3 works.

Sources:

Boucher, John N. History of Westmoreland County. New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1906.

Enman, John Aubrey. "The Relationship of Coal Mining and Coke Making to the Distribution of Population Agglomerations in the Connellsville (Pennsylvania) Beehive Coke Region" (Ph. D. Diss, University of Pittsburgh, 1962).

Halberstadt, Baird. General Map of the Bituminous Coal Fields of Pennsylvania. Pottsville: Halberstadt Publisher, 1903 and 1907 editions.

"Historical Data: H. H. Frick Coke Company's Plants." Unpublished document in possession of USX

Corporation Resource Management in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. n.d. (ca. 1942).

Keystone Consolidated Publishing Company. The Coal Catalog, Including Directory of Mines.

Pittsburgh: Keystone Consolidated Company, 1914 edition.

Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs, Bureau of Mines. Report of the Bureau of Mines of the Department of Internal Affairs of Pennsylvania, 1900. Harrisburg: Wm. Stanley Ray, State Printer, 1901.

Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs. Reports of the Inspectors of Mines of the Anthracite and Bituminous Coal Regions of Pennsylvania for the Year 1890. Harrisburg: Edwin K. Meyers, State Printer, 1891.

Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs. Reports of the Inspectors of Mines of the Anthracite and Bituminous Coal Regions of Pennsylvania for the Year 1889. Harrisburg: Edwin K. Meyers, State Printer, 1890.

Pennsylvania Department of Mines. Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Part II -- Bituminous, 1923-1926. Harrisburg: J. L. L. Kuhn, 1927.

Pennsylvania Department of Mines. Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Part II -- Bituminous, 1918. Harrisburg: J. L. L. Kuhn, State Printer, 1920.

Pennsylvania Department of Mines. Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Part II -- Bituminous, 1915. Harrisburg: Wm. Stanley Ray, State Printer, 1916.